

IN THE
WEST INDIES

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ANTRIM VALLEY, DOMINICA

In the West Indies

BY
W. B. F.

With six illustrations from original photographs

LONDON
ARNOLD FAIRBAIRNS
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NOTE

The following articles are reprinted from the
Enfield Observer.

I take this opportunity of thanking my publisher
for careful editing.

W. B. F.

CARDIFF,
Christmas 1905

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ACROSS JAMAICA

KINGSTON, with its neighbour Port Royal, is probably the best-known place of all our possessions in the West Indies. So much has been talked about it, so much romance centred in and around it, that all Englishmen know of it. It will therefore suffice to say that on arriving there after a thirteen-days' voyage on one of the ships of the Imperial Direct West India Mail Service we went to the Constant Spring Hotel. This hotel, four miles out from Kingston, on rising ground 300 feet high, commands fine views, and is charmingly situated in a large garden. It was from this place that we determined on an expedition to Port Antonio, on the north side of the Island, crossing the Peak of the Blue Mountains, and returning through the Bog Walk to Spanish Town.

The first stage of the journey we made on the electric tramway which connects Constant Spring with Kingston, half way between the two places being Half-Way Tree, where a branch line leads up to Papine Corner, passing the Hope Gardens and King's House. Hope Gardens, the station of the Imperial Department of Agriculture,

well repay a visit, not only on account of their extreme beauty, but from the great interest the visitor may find in seeing the cultivation of economic plants, shrubs, and trees. King's House, on the same road, is the residence of the Governor of Jamaica.

We had arranged for the hire of ponies and a sumpter mule to meet us at Papine, and on arriving found them waiting. For some distance a good road winds uphill, following the course of the Hope River. Just before reaching Gordon Town we took a bridle path turning off from the main road, the ascent becoming much steeper, and leading through the forest. After an hour's steady climb a fine view is obtained of Newcastle, where are situated the barracks of the West India Regiment, while higher still is Castletown, noted principally for its beautiful botanical gardens. As the road wound round the side of the mountain, ever ascending, a series of lovely views was obtained down the valleys. From the top of the first ridge a magnificent sight is presented by the Peak itself (7,500 feet high) to the summit of which extends the luxurious vegetation. A steep descent brought us to the banks of the Yallus River, at this season almost dry, but becoming a roaring torrent in the rainy season. We called a halt for a picnic luncheon in this delightful place, where, in the shade of a huge boulder,

overhung by graceful tree-ferns, we enjoyed a two-hours' rest. After crossing the river, the bridle-path, bordered by bamboos, becomes steeper and steeper, until a level stretch of about a mile brings the traveller to Whitfield Hall. A night's lodging may be obtained in this house, the centre of an extensive coffee plantation. Situated at the base of the Peak, and commanding superb views, the Hall is an ideal planter's residence. Flowers, fruit, and vegetables, grow in the well-tended garden, while for acres around the white star-like flowers of the coffee shrubs scent the air with their delicious perfume.

From Whitfield Hall to the top of the Peak is a six-mile walk over a fairly well defined path, and in order to see the sunrise we had to start at 2 a.m. Cold and cheerless it was turning out on the windy mountain side at this hour, the moon fitfully shining through a cloudy sky, and in parts failing to penetrate the thick forest growth through which the path wound. It was impossible to do more than just keep to the path, and walk as fast as a bad track, and, in places, pitch darkness, would allow. Just before reaching the summit dense clouds enveloped the mountain, and struck cold to one's very bones. But at last, and with a few minutes to spare, the top was gained and the cloud left below. Bitterly cold it

was standing on that wind-swept eminence waiting for dawn!

At last a great cloud, hanging in the darkness overhead, turned pink, and in the east pale light streaks became visible. Then a great mass of cloud caught the first golden rays on its edge, becoming more and more brilliant as the light became stronger. Suddenly the sun surmounted the clouds, and it was day. Above, the clear blue sky shot in a thousand radiations of gold; below, mass upon mass of billowy cloud-land, obscuring all view, but gradually melting in the warming atmosphere. Then the sight that was revealed was one to which no pen can do justice. Away on the horizon of an azure sea lay the Island of Cuba, its mountain range capped with cloud. To right and left the serrated line of the Blue Mountains, intersected by an endless number of valleys running north and south to the sea. The St. Catherine and John Crow Peaks stood like islands in the cloud belt which circled their bases, marking the course of two rivers, while Jamaica, "Pearl of the Antilles," was set in the silver streak of sea, breaking on its coral-bound coast. Light and shade in ever-changing form and intensity marked every detail of scenery in that wonderful panorama; and then, as we looked, down came the cloud again, and we started back.



BLUE MOUNTAIN PEAK, JAMAICA

The Blue Mountains are world-renowned for the luxuriance of the vegetation which clothes their sides. But, having come up in the dark, one was unprepared for the lavish hand with which Nature had strewn that flower garden. Calceolarias, begonias, passion-flowers, fuchsias, in wildest profusion, grew everywhere, their brilliant flowers lighting up a background covered with every variety of fern, maidenhair predominating. Across the path trickled little streams of pure mountain water, forming miniature cascades, or shady pools almost hidden in a wealth of flower and fern. Birds twittered in the woods, or flashed their brilliant plumage from tree to tree, while great butterflies, from palest yellow to deepest purple, floated from flower to flower. For six miles down the mountain side we walked knee-deep in the most beautiful flower garden Nature has ever gathered together.

Breakfast awaited our return to Whitfield Hall, and here, on the one spot on earth in which it grows, we drank the Blue Mountain coffee. So small (comparatively) is the crop, and so excellent the flavour, that the variety is almost exclusively used as a "blend," and is therefore seldom tasted outside Jamaica. Leaving the Hall, we descended 1,500 feet through the plantation, and then began an ascent of 3,000 feet to Cinchona, where some years ago the Government laid out an

extensive plantation of trees, from the bark of which "quinine" is obtained. Then, following the ridge of the mountains, we arrived at Chester Vale, another delightfully-situated coffee plantation, where we were hospitably entertained for the night. Early next morning we walked to the Silver Hill Gap, where a buggy awaited us in which we drove to Buff Bay. The drive takes six hours, starting from an elevation of a little over 4,000 feet, and an excellent road follows the course of the valley to the sea. Perhaps the greatest interest of the drive, apart from the magnificent scenery, is to note the different cultivations passed through—coffee, cacao, pineapples and bananas to the cocoa-nut palms which fringe the shore. From Buff Bay to Port Antonio the railway, an admirable piece of engineering, winds along the coast, affording delightful views

Port Antonio is the second important shipping place in the Island, vast quantities of fruit (particularly bananas) being exported in the ships by the United Fruit Company to the United States. The town is very picturesque, and completely surrounded by the banana cultivations which extend for many miles along the coast. Returning by rail the next day, we passed Buff Bay again, and went on to Bog Walk, where, leaving the railway, we took a buggy to drive to Spanish Town through the gorge of the Rio

Cobre River. Bog Walk has a curious etymology, being derived from the Spanish "Boca del Agua," or "Mouth of the Water," denoting probably the source of the Rio Cobre, and its confluence with several mountain streams. I cannot attempt a description of this lovely piece of tropical scenery other than to say that the winding road, sometimes creeping under overhanging crag, or sweeping in a curve round some bold eminence, affords another striking example of Jamaican scenery at its best. Terminating on a flat and fertile plane, the road leads to Spanish Town, the ancient capital of Jamaica, where the quaint cathedral well repays a visit. Taking train from Spanish Town to Kingston, the line runs through land, every acre of which is under banana cultivation, and is one of the richest districts in the Island.

Before quitting the subject of travelling in Jamaica, it is of interest to remark on the excellence of the roads, which have proved of such inestimable benefit in opening up the agricultural resources of the Island. The Railways too, besides their economic use, enable the traveller to see the country quickly and inexpensively. Being partly British and partly American in construction, they afford an interesting object lesson in the much disputed point of superior merit claimed on both sides of the Atlantic.

A NEW COTTON LAND

THE movement started two years ago to cultivate cotton in the West Indies was more an attempt to revive a once flourishing industry than to start a new one. The West Indies produced cotton before it was grown in the United States, and the "American" cotton supplies were obtained from these Islands and exported to Europe. In 1801 25,000 bales were obtained, but since that time the crop has gradually diminished until it has given place entirely to other cultivations which produced a greater profit. From the earliest records we learn that cotton has been indigenous to the West Indies, and it is mentioned by Columbus as growing abundantly in 1492. Cotton is in fact generally indigenous to the islands and maritime lands of the tropics, and under cultivation has been grown as far as 40 degrees north and south of the equator. The limit of economic growth is 30 degrees, so that Jamaica, lying 18 degrees north, is well within the limit.

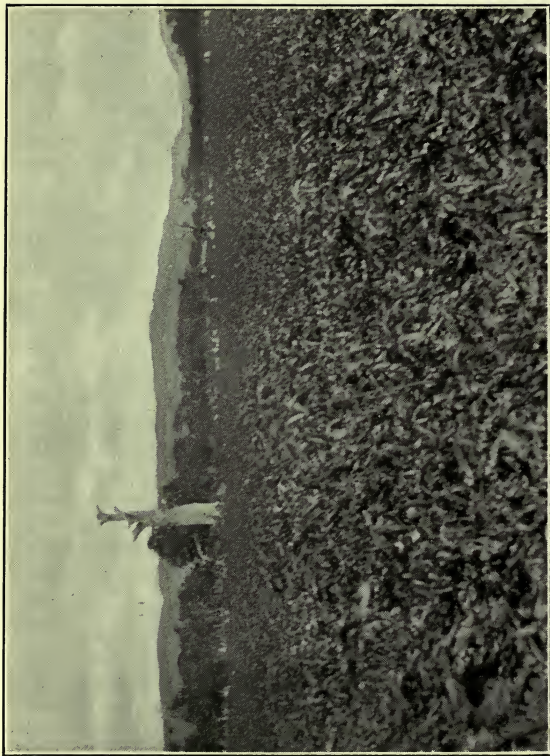
The history of cotton, both in its use to man, and the important place it holds in the economics of the world, is far beyond the scope of this article, our present object being

to enquire into those conditions essential to the successful cultivation of cotton in Jamaica, and to see how these conditions obtain in the Island.

First, as to climate. Cotton requires a humid climate, wet during the season of planting, and dry during the period when the plant is maturing and the crop gathered. Jamaica possesses two well-defined wet and dry seasons, and the rapid growth of the plant enables two crops to be gathered in each year. Seed planted during the late October rains bears in the following March during a dry season, and the land being again made ready for seed during the April rains, a second crop may be gathered in the following September, and so on. The average annual rainfall on those lands most suitable for growing cotton in Jamaica is seventy-two inches, which is the requisite amount; more rain would cause rot, while less does not allow the plant to mature properly. Soil is the most important factor, and here again the special conditions available in Jamaica are helpful. The coast lands being the most suitable are covered with "bush" of some forty or fifty years' growth, and are the lands which formerly were under sugar-cane cultivation. The soil is for the most part a light loam, covered in places to a depth of nine inches with humus. This humus forms the richest and most suitable soil for cotton, and

the constant drainage from the high mountains of the interior is always adding to the deposit. So rich is the land that physical chemists believe no manure would be required for at least five years. In this connection it may be mentioned that cotton takes little from the soil, being largely a leaf-feeder, and in the cultivation returning almost all that is taken.

It will suffice to describe the cotton plant itself as belonging to the mallow family. It is an herbaceous shrub, but in cultivation annual or biennial, tap-rooted, with a straight stem, and bearing a five-petal flower of the colour of a Maréchal Niel rose. The "boll" or fruit somewhat resembles a beech-nut in form, but is as large as a walnut. In this boll the fibre (or lint) is closely packed round the seeds, which are removed in the "ginning." It is impossible to find a more beautiful cultivation than cotton, the whole field presenting the appearance of a rose garden, the flowers turning, without showing any sign of dying, from palest yellow to pink. There are many varieties of cotton, but the two sorts most suitable for West Indian cultivation are the Sea Island and Egyptian. Both these varieties are long-staple cotton, and their commercial value depends upon the length, strength, and colour of the lint. To obtain these conditions in the greatest perfection, the plant should be



SEA ISLAND COTTON, SPANISH TOWN

cultivated under the influence of sea air. It is computed that there exists to-day 100,000 acres of virgin land in a belt eight miles wide around the coasts of Jamaica, every acre of which is suitable for cotton growing. The land, being once cleared of the bush and ploughed, requires only hoeing; and the planting of the seed and the picking of the cotton is work of such light nature, that it is best suited to women and children. To maintain 1,000 acres of land under cotton requires in all about 200 hands. The population of the Island is 800,000, and therefore, if all the available land were cultivated, but 20,000 people would be required out of the entire population. By far the greater number of the people live on the coast lands, where too are the towns, and the people are ready and willing to earn money. The average wage which can be earned in the cotton field by a woman is 2s. a day. This is 100 per cent. more than the average wage earned in other Island industries.

I should like to take this opportunity of saying a word about the Jamaica nigger. Much has been written on the subject—and much said that were better left unwritten. A great deal depends upon the nature of the employer himself, and in any large numbers the handling of labour cannot but be unsatisfactory in the hands of a petty-minded and intolerant master. What is so often taken

for laziness is more often slowness, and this both of mind and body. Stupidity too is alleged against the nigger, an accusation which is frequently wrong when proper allowance is made for his slow-working mind. The nigger is no more a born worker than he is a born fool, and by constant encouragement, constant urging, and constant explanation, may become a ready, if not a particularly willing, worker. But, above all, the nigger is fair-minded, and must be met in a spirit not only of fair, but of "broad"-mindedness. His arguments are reasonable, if not quite European in their inception, and acting according to his lights, he expects to be met by an equal reason.

In illustration, I recall the case of a nigger who received three months' imprisonment for theft from his employer. On the day of his release he returned to his work. He had done wrong—frankly admitted; he had been punished—and there was an end of it. He was reinstated, and to the best of my knowledge still retains his position. To have treated that man as a criminal would have been the most certain way of making him one. I do not agree that the nigger may be the most incorrigible rogue, but what class or what country can claim immunity from rogues? He is kind-hearted—his treatment of women and children shows that; his treatment of dumb animals may leave something

to be desired, but in extenuation I would attribute this more to thoughtlessness than to inherent cruelty : and just as children may be corrected for this fault, so may the nigger. He has his sentimental side, and he has often a keen sense of simple humour. As children or animals know their friends by instinct, so does the nigger, and a kind word or simple joke will provoke a broad smile and a laughing retort. He can respect where respect is deserved ; equally he can show contempt, and this may take the form of such flowers of speech as frequently adorn the conversation of his betters.

I could not leave this subject without a word about the "piccaninnies," who never fail to evoke the liveliest sympathy. Sturdy, healthy little creatures they are, with inordinate appetites, and doted on by their parents. With the new cotton industry springing up in Jamaica, many of the little girls can find employment, healthy and remunerative, in picking the cotton. The work is light, and they come to it with their mothers in little groups, chattering, grimacing and laughing together. One little black fairy, aged nine (her name was " Sylvia ") was a most industrious worker, and could earn ninepence a day. I asked her where her mother was—she was dead ; and father?—in prison. She was being looked after by some sort of undefined relative, and was a brave little soul

with a great sense of her responsibilities, and an infinite patience in waiting for father. An infinitude of happiness and tragedy may be found in the cotton field, and good-humoured merriment too as the people saunter home in the evening, faithfully promising to be back in the fields at break of day, or, as they express it in their picturesque way, " 'Fore morning star him put he cut."

To convert an acre of land from bush and bring the crop to the gin costs about £5. Land may be bought very cheaply or rented for a nominal sum. One acre of Sea Island cotton can give 1,000 pounds of lint, and, although this amount may be thought excessive, I have proved its accuracy. The price of Sea Island cotton in Manchester to-day is 1s. 6d. per pound. It may easily be seen therefore what great possibilities exist. The great essential is co-operation. Cotton must be sold in large quantities of the same variety and uniform quality. Every facility is being offered to the planter to co-operate in this movement to grow cotton under the British flag. The railway and steamship rates have been arranged on a basis to give encouragement to the industry, and side by side with these commercial considerations are those of the life.

The West Indian planter is not subject to those trying conditions found in less favoured places. The climate, to the European, is one

of the healthiest in the world. He may enjoy the society of his fellow creatures, and is not isolated in some inaccessible part. Excellent sport is to be obtained, both shooting and fishing, while the whole day may be passed on horseback. The Jamaican breed of horse is hardy and fast, and there are race-meetings and polo.

The voyage from England, thanks to the enterprise of Sir Alfred Jones, has been reduced to one of ten days, and the Imperial Direct West India Mail Service run ships which, in point of comfort and luxury, leave nothing to be desired. The terrors of a voyage to the West Indies, on such a vessel as the "Port Kingston," can only exist in the imagination of those who would probably not go even if they could walk. To leave behind the rigors of a northern climate for one which is never too hot, and is never cold, is not only a pleasure, but the privilege we enjoy from our beautiful Island possessions in the American Mediterranean.

PUERTO RICO

IN spite of the great facilities offered to the Englishman to visit the West Indian Islands, the fact remains that by the fastest boat the voyage is one of ten days. Generally, however, a fortnight has to be allowed, and this, unless one is an enthusiastic sailor, is a deterrent to many. To the traveller from the United States a voyage of four or five days is not such a drawback. A weekly service of good steamers is maintained between New York and San Juan, leaving at noon on Saturday and arriving the following Wednesday or Thursday. Occasionally Cape Hatteras may be seen in clear weather, otherwise no sight of land is obtained until the hazy heights of Puerto Rico are seen on the horizon.

A great headland of rock into and around which is built the Morro, an old Spanish fortress, completely obstructs the view of the fine bay which forms the harbour of San Juan. As the steamer enters the narrow channel which alone is navigable, fine views may be obtained of the Casa Blanca, the White Palace and the Pink Palace, splendidly and solidly set on this rocky prominence.

The whole town rises up precipitously from the water's edge. The landing stages run along a straight road, and are bordered by warehouses and all the signs of a busy port.

The first enquiries of the traveller are about the hotels, and it may be stated at once that the accommodation offered by San Juan in this respect is very poor. Choice lies between the Hotel Inglaterra in the town, and the Hotel Olympo, three or four miles away, but connected by electric tramway. For a stay of a few days the former is preferable, as being in the town itself it affords easier access to the places of interest. Terms are generally arranged on the "American plan," or, as we say, "en pension," and the cost is 10s. to 12s. a day. If an upper room is secured, a fine view over the bay to a background of mountains is obtained.

San Juan is built on the end of a tongue of land, some three miles long and one-half to a mile broad. On the northern side the Atlantic Ocean breaks incessantly in big waves, to the south is the bay and harbour. Casa Blanca, the residence of the officer commanding the troops, is the highest point of the headland, and but a little lower down is the White Palace, or, as it is officially named, "Executive House," where the Governor resides. Built almost entirely of white stone, with floors and pillars of black

and white marble, this Palace was formerly occupied by the Spanish Governor. It contains large and beautifully proportioned reception rooms, leading on to balconies, and a charming little enclosed garden. No more picturesque scene can be imagined than this Palace, brilliantly lighted up by electric light on those occasions when a reception is held. The old-world setting to the scene of animation and gaiety is striking. Crowds of white-uniformed officers and smartly-dressed women form a picture which is more often associated with great capitals. Side by side with the White Palace is the Pink Palace, an almost equally beautiful building, though not quite so large. This is occupied by the Colonial Secretary. Although denuded of their works of art by the Spaniards, great care and good taste have been exercised in furnishing these palaces, and much, if not all, of what was most attractive under the old régime retained.

In the centre of San Juan is a fine square on which are situated the most important Government buildings, including the General Post Office. An electric tramway starts from this square, and, passing through the principal streets of the town, runs down the length of the promontory to Santurce. It is a long, straight, dusty, road. A statue of Christopher Columbus stands at the lower end. There are barracks, a naval depot,

hospital, wireless telegraph station, and base-ball ground. Just as Santurce is reached one passes the Union Club, the Hotel Olympo, and many very pretty private houses, each with a lovely garden. There is a Country Club, an institution the American has brought with him, where, in the afternoons, sea-bathing is indulged in.

Passing through Santurce, this road crosses the Island to Ponce, and is known as the Military Road. It was constructed by the Spaniards, and is a fine piece of engineering. It is kept in excellent repair and is the main mail-coach road from north to south. A single line of narrow gauge railway runs from San Juan along the north coast to Arecibo. This part of the country is likely to become at no distant date an important orange-growing district. Excellent agricultural conditions prevail, and the facilities offered by the railway for transport to the port of San Juan are obvious. That the life in San Juan is enjoyable is exemplified by the increasing number of visitors the town receives every winter. The most friendly intercourse exists between American and Puerto Rican. It is remarkable how the American has adopted the manners and customs of the country where such are most suited to the life.

But still more wonderful is the way in which the Islanders have accepted the

American standard of "up-to-dateness." Everywhere is improvement met with, but in the most marked degree in cleanliness and sanitation. Tramways, the electric light, telephones, and other marks of twentieth-century convenience, are everywhere in evidence.

A journey from San Juan on the north to Ponce on the south side is a day's drive—and one never to be forgotten. Arrangements should be made over-night for a "coche," or carriage, and a bargain made with the driver. Fifteen to eighteen dollars (75s. to 90s.) is the price demanded. The coche is a four-wheeled conveyance, with room for three people. There is a top and sides of waterproof cloth, which is a protection against either sun or storm. Two fast-trotting little ponies of Puerto Rican breed pull a load of three people and the luggage, which is strapped on behind.

The best time to start is five a.m., although it is still dark. The first light appears as we reach Santurce, where the road is bordered by houses standing in beautiful gardens. At Rio Piedras the Governor has a "summer residence," a delightful house in a typically tropical garden, full of palm trees and scarlet hybiscus. For four hours the road is almost level, and Caguas should be reached about nine. Here the ponies are changed at a little inn, which gives the traveller long

enough to get a cup of coffee and a roll of country bread.

Caguas is situated at the foot of the mountains, and the road begins a steady ascent. An avenue of flamboyant trees extends for several miles, and few more lovely sights can be seen than these masses of red flowers, not unlike a large nasturtium. Everywhere too grow the Royal Palms, with straight, silvery trunk and gracefully curved leaf. As the road gets steeper and the ponies drop into a walk an opportunity is afforded the traveller of noticing the luxuriant growth of fern and flower, perhaps the most noticeable of all being the begonias.

At Cayey, reached about one o'clock, the American Hotel invites to luncheon, while another change of ponies is made. The village consists of one principal street of wooden houses, of which the American Hotel, possessing five bedrooms, is the largest! The road now runs along the mountain side, affording a superb view of the valley below, where the American and Puerto Rican Tobacco Company have extensive plantations. A curious sight it is to see many acres covered in with cheese-cloth for producing "shade-grown" tobacco. Away down in the bottom of the valley they look like big patches of snow remaining unmelted in some sheltered spot.

At Aibonito the highest part of the pass

is attained—about 3,200 feet—and again a fine view is obtained, ridge upon ridge of mountains as far as the eye can reach. Ponies are changed for the third time, and now the road is downhill. Coamo is at the foot of the pass, and it was here that, when the American and Spanish troops were opposing each other, news came of the cessation of hostilities. A road branches off to the left, and leads to the Coamo Springs, a bathing establishment. Many travellers pass a night or more here. There is a good hotel, and the hot-water baths are very beneficial to the rheumatic. Continuing along the Military Road, the sugar-cane cultivations begin a little before Juana Diaz, where the last change of ponies is made. Then nine miles of flat, dusty road, and at last Ponce.

In spite of the great beauty of the scenery, the drive of eighty-two miles in fourteen hours is very tiring, and one is glad to find a comfortable hotel and a good dinner. In this respect Ponce is more fortunate than San Juan, there being two really good hotels. The Hotel Meliar situated on the Piazza is typically Puerto Rican, while the Hotel Français is, as its name implies, French. The Meliar, however, possesses a great attraction from its situation. All roads in Ponce seem to have their origin from the Piazza, in the centre of which an enclosed

space, prettily planted with palms, contains a band-stand, thus constituting it the promenade of the town. In the same open space stands the Cathedral, a somewhat severe but not unattractive building.

Ponce has 30,000 inhabitants. It is the most important business centre in Puerto Rico, situated in the middle of the sugarcane plantations, and being the principal shipping port for coffee. An admirable electric tramway system serves the town, connecting it with the Playa two miles away which is the port where are situated the principal business houses and warehouses. The landing of the American troops was effected here, and the town occupied without a blow being struck. Many millions of dollars have found their way to Ponce, and are invested profitably in the sugar and coffee plantations around it, so the town wears a prosperous air. Two lines of railway run east and west which, although primarily used for bringing cane to the factories, are destined to form an important part of the railway schemes projected for the Island.

The combination of the old-world Spain and new-world America is perhaps more marked here than in San Juan, and there is no one in Ponce but will stoutly maintain the superiority of his town over the capital. Both possess attractions so pronounced that to differentiate is a hard task. Ponce

possesses a good club, a race-course, a baseball ground, where every Saturday afternoon "Americanos contra Puerto Ricanos" lead to sharply-contested matches. And here let it be noted that the hot-blooded Puerto Rican is as good a sportsman as his American rival.

Whether the journey be continued eastward or westward along the coast from Ponce, both routes lead through many miles of cane cultivation, and both are of great interest. There is a fortnightly service of steamers from Ponce to New York, and the traveller may avail himself of this means of returning if he so desires; French and Spanish liners also call periodically.

The difficulty of the language has been overcome by an earnest endeavour on the part of both peoples to come to a quick understanding, and the American has learnt Spanish no less quickly than the Puerto Rican has acquired English. It must be remembered that New York, or other of the large eastern towns of the United States, have long been regarded by the Puerto Rican as the place in which to spend his money, or educate his children. Therefore many, if not all, of the upper classes are conversant with English. Large sums of money have been spent on the establishment of schools throughout the Island. Here the teaching of English is compulsory, and it may be confidently asserted that in a decade as much

English as Spanish will be heard in the country. Taxation is light, and assistance accorded to the improvement of the land. Labour is plentiful and well paid. The United States coinage has completely superseded the Spanish. With a view to exploiting the agricultural resources of the Island to the utmost, the State Department has organised Botanical Stations with headquarters at Mayaguez on the west coast. Here are to be found all the economic plants and trees, growing under the supervision of experts. The Meteorological Department, for which the United States have done such splendid work, is busy compiling a mass of statistics, which will be of incalculable benefit to the agriculturist.

In a word, a state of affairs exists to-day in Puerto Rico which is the antithesis of the former government. It is not too much to say, that, from a place of economic insignificance, the American will raise Puerto Rico to an Island of the first importance in the West Indies, and this result may be looked for in a very little while.

INDUSTRIAL PUERTO RICO

SINCE the discovery of Puerto Rico by Christopher Columbus in 1492 but little has been heard of the Island, which remained in the possession of Spain until the disastrous war with the United States in 1898 wrested her colonial dependencies from her. It will be remembered how Admiral Sampson pursued the luckless Spanish Admiral Cervera through the waters of the American Mediterranean, as the Caribbean Sea is called, finally entrapping him in the harbour of Santiago de Cuba, and totally destroying his fleet. By the Peace which followed the Philippine Islands in the Pacific Ocean, and Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Atlantic, were ceded to the United States. The pacification of the Philippines is not yet entirely accomplished; Cuba has been given her independence, and Puerto Rico is rapidly becoming a prosperous American Colony.

Situated between the 17th and 18th degrees of north latitude, Puerto Rico is the most north-easterly of all the Islands known collectively as the West Indies. In area it is about equal to Jamaica, and possesses an almost similar climate, although its mean

annual temperature is somewhat lower on account of its position, unsheltered from the north-east trade wind which blows continually over it. It is intersected from east to west by a range of mountains, the greatest altitude being between three and four thousand feet. Innumerable rivers flow from this water-shed northward to the Atlantic Ocean and southward to the Caribbean Sea. There is an ample rainfall at well-defined seasons, and the climate, although in parts a little humid, is very healthy. The soil is rich, varied, and very productive, and, most important of all, frost is unknown. It is to this fact that Puerto Rico owes its great importance in the eyes of the American colonist. From time to time, Florida and California are subjected to slight frosts, which do incalculable damage to the orange and grapefruit trees, resulting not only in the loss of a single crop, but in the entire destruction of the trees themselves. For this reason the American capitalist is making strenuous efforts to cultivate the finest varieties of oranges in this Island which produces indigenously one of the best flavoured and sweetest oranges in the world, immense quantities of which are being shipped to the United States. It is, however, from the sugar-cane and coffee tree that the greatest return may be expected.

Puerto Rico has long enjoyed the reputation

of producing, if not the finest, at least one of the finest sorts of coffee in the world. Formerly, almost the entire crop found its way to Vienna, where it was mostly used to blend with varieties of lesser excellence. Now, thanks to the tariff which aids the American at home, the bulk will be exported to the United States. It is computed that the consumption of coffee in the United States is 28,000,000 pounds per annum. The whole of this is imported produce. The total output of coffee from the Island of Puerto Rico is not more than 2,500,000 pounds per annum. It will therefore be obvious that with a protective duty in favour of Puerto Rico a splendid opportunity exists for an enterprising colonist. With regard to the cost of making a coffee plantation a few facts may be of interest. A minimum capital of £2,500 is required, which will admit of the purchase of 100 acres of land, absorbing £300. Clearing, and planting ninety trees to the acre, and the cultivation of this for four years, £1,300; the cost of putting the crop on the market is £800—£2,400 altogether. It has been proved, after many years of experience, that an average of two pounds of coffee per tree may be expected after two years. From 90,000 trees, therefore, 180,000 pounds of coffee should be gathered. Taking the price of coffee at $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ per pound, it will be seen that a profit of

£3,375 may be realized at the expiration of three years.

It must be remembered, however, that 100 acres of land purchased will not mean 100 acres of land suitable for growing coffee, but in every 100 acres sixty-five to seventy will be fine virgin soil. Labour is good and plentiful, a good "peon" earning as much as 2s. a day. The most suitable districts for coffee cultivation are the mountain slopes on the south. The life of the planter, if somewhat isolated, is an extremely healthy one, in which there is endless occupation and interest. Living is very cheap, it being almost impossible to spend money in the mountainous districts. Little meat is obtainable, but the settler may keep any amount of poultry, while a kitchen garden of the greatest variety is made in three months. Puerto Rico possesses a breed of small hardy ponies which may be obtained for £6 to £10, and an abundance of "grass" providing the best of fodder grows everywhere. At the present time coffee is somewhat neglected in favour of sugar, and many small ready-made plantations are to be had on reasonable terms. But this is a state of things which will not last long as the opportunities offered are too good to be neglected.

With the American occupation, an immense impetus was given to the cultivation of sugar-cane, and large sums of money

were invested in machinery and the production of the cane. The most optimistic views have been realized after the expiration of five years, and the sugar-cane planter may now be said to be in clover. The climate, soil and labour conditions, aided by protection and an energetic lot of men, have raised the sugar estates to a place of the first importance in the Island. Large central factories were started at various places, in some cases by private enterprise, others formed small companies. Land in the immediate vicinity of the "central" was cultivated by the manufacturer of the sugar cane, but in order to obtain sufficient cane for the capacity of the mill, colonists were induced to take up land and grow cane for them on agreed terms. For the smaller capitalist this offered a good opportunity, he being enabled to take as much land as his means would allow and have a ready and handy market for his crop.

The opportunities offered by this scheme are again best shown by figures. The minimum acreage on which a productive cane plantation can be made is 400 acres, to obtain which, making allowance for the necessary buildings, roads, irrigation canals, etc., 500 acres should be leased. To bring this land into bearing requires a capital of £5,000. Land may be leased at £1 an acre, and £10 an acre must be expended

in cultivating and maturing the crop, which takes two years. This absorbs the capital. Twenty-five tons of cane should be realized on each acre planted, yielding $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons of sugar, or a total of 1,000 tons of sugar for the 400 acres. Taking the price of sugar at £10 per ton, a gross profit of £10,000 is made. The "central" has, however, advanced the money necessary to bring this crop to the factory, thus minimising the capital outlay of the planter in his rent and cultivation. The net profit, after making allowance for this, and the manufacture of the sugar, is in practice 40—50 per cent. of the gross profit, or in actual figures £4,000 to £5,000. This, it will be admitted, is a very good return. Considering the depressed state of the sugar industry in Jamaica, it will be obvious what an immense advantage the Puerto Rican planter derives from his protective tariff. Millions of dollars have been invested in the sugar plantations of Puerto Rico and the high prices ruling in the United States during the shipments of sugar in the months of March, April, and May, 1905, have enabled the planters to realize heavy profits, a large percentage of which will be expended in increasing the acreage under cultivation. A similar principle has been adopted in the growth of tobacco plants, from which excellent cigars are made. These find a ready market in the

United States at prices which leave a handsome profit to grower, manufacturer and importer.

In fact, the American has proved himself an admirable colonist, taking the fullest advantage of the splendid opportunities offered. Besides this, he is not far from home. Two lines of steamships—the New York and Puerto Rican—and the Red “D” lines, maintain a weekly service with the Island, leaving New York at noon on Saturday, and arriving in San Juan, the capital, on the following Wednesday or Thursday. The ships remain five days, making a tour of the Island, and returning to New York. The social conditions which exist under the present Governor, the first civil administration after a military rule which has lasted for five years, is a very interesting study, being the first attempt of an Anglo-Saxon race to rule one of Latin extraction. Suffice it to say that the condition of the people and the prosperity which is surely coming to the Island are a great tribute to the earnestness and thoroughness of the Americans in the West Indies.

A PICNIC IN PUERTO RICO

WITH two American friends, I was invited to visit a Puerto Rico coffee plantation, situated high up in the mountains, some eighteen miles from Ponce, the seaport town on the south side of the Island. As this involved a long ride we sent our horses the day before to the village of Juana Diaz, and arranged to set out ourselves at dawn the following day. It was still dark when our nigger servant brought me the cup of strong coffee without which a day in the West Indies is ill-begun. Half an hour later we started in a four-wheeled buggy just as the Southern Cross was paling in the purple haze of dawn, and the breeze, herald of sunrise, sprang up. The driver jerked the reins, and invoking the aid of every saint in the alendar, induced his two ponies to start at a gallop over a very bad road. Ten minutes later we were clear of the town, and as the sun rose behind us the flat, unshaded, dusty, road lay straight ahead, bordered by fields of ripened sugar cane, and the outline of the mountains stood out sharply defined against a cloudless sky. An old country-woman was trudging along the road to

market with a heavy basket of deliciously sweet wild oranges (which are indigenous to the Island) deftly balanced on her head, and we covered the floor of our buggy with our purchases, costing a few coppers. For our money too we got that verbose recommendation to Heaven so dear to the Spaniard. Merrily rattled the buggy over the nine miles which we had to drive to meet our horses, and the journey was accomplished in three-quarters of an hour.

The village of Juana Diaz, situated on sloping ground at the foot of the mountains, possesses a quaint and artistic Spanish church, standing on one side of a little "plaza," bright with flowers, around which an active market was going on. We found our horses in the midst of an admiring and critical crowd, for from the smallest boy every Puerto Rican is not only an admirable horseman but a judge of horses. What with criticism, advice, and offers of purchase, saddling the horses was no easy job. We had brought our saddles with us in order that the horses might travel more easily the day before. At last we got the saddles on and set off at a canter. A sharp descent brought us to a river, after fording which the steep ascent of the mountains began. Among its many merits the Puerto Rican horse is a very quick walker, and in Indian file we rode up a gorge through which, in the rainy

season, rushes a torrent to join the river. Occasionally we came across the dwelling of some husbandman who cultivated his little patch of coffee, and as the track turned and twisted about lovely views of wood and water revealed themselves, to be lost to sight again as the path led through forest or followed the windings of the gorge. Three miles from our destination a fairly good road has been constructed, which, as the property is developed, will eventually be continued to join the main road at Juana Diaz. After a rest we again mounted, and another hour's ride brought us to a plateau on which a settlement has been built, overlooked from more elevated ground by the house of our host. Being a "fiesta," the whole of the village people (who are the employees on the estate, and number some 300 or 400) were grouped round the single "tienda" or general store, inn, and rendezvous of the place.

Don Pedro Juan (for so in Spanish parlance our worthy host is named) met us at his garden gate, and together we went to see to the comfort of our horses, and then on to his cool and shady veranda for the "manana." Why "manana" (English: morning) I never could discover, but in plain English it signifies the "drink," which in Puerto Rico is the prelude to any form of intercourse, no matter at what hour

it may take place. Fresh horses were then provided for us, and we made a tour of the plantation. The estate produces some of the best variety of coffee in the world. The trees are healthy and well grown, and bear two years after planting. Coffee is "washed" on the plantation, then packed in sacks ("quintals" they are called) containing 110 pounds, and two sacks are slung across a mule for transportation to Ponce. Here the coffee is bought by the merchant and exported, mostly to Europe, though nowadays, since the American occupation, in ever-increasing quantities to the United States. We rode beyond the bounds of the plantation, through forest, up to the very top of the mountain, which is over 3,000 feet high. A most magnificent view is obtained. To the north the Atlantic breaks in a white line of surf along the rocky coast; on the south the Island is bounded by the blue Caribbean Sea. From north to south the view is eighty miles in extent. Forest-clad peaks rise in ragged ridges east and west, while under our feet stretch mile upon mile of sugar-cane fields, their vivid green contrasting with the background of blue sea. Luncheon was ready, and welcome, when we got back to the house. Puerto Rican fare is excellent, consisting of all that the West Indies yield in variety and nourishment. The dish of the country—"pilau"

—is excellent, the coffee as one drinks it a thing to be remembered, and a Puerto Rican cigar, made of tobacco grown and manufactured in these mountains, not to be beaten by the best that Havana exports.

As we sat smoking we were serenaded by the village band. This consisted of two trombones and a hollow gourd, which is cut in a series of ridges and scraped with a piece of metal, marking time and producing a not unpleasing rhythm. Puerto Rico has a music of its own, as it has a national dance; and to the Puerto Rican to hear these weird but charming airs is to dance. It would want the hand of a Watteau to depict this “foire de village” in its setting of green trees, scarlet hybiscus, and purple bourganvilla. Grace, animation, and vivid colouring, leave a lasting impression on the mind, and a happy souvenir to bring into the more prosaic life of northern latitudes.

But we had eighteen miles to ride home and our horses were ready. Don Pedro Juan was to return with us, and we set off down the mountain preceded by the band and surrounded by the natives. For a mile these good-natured people bore us company, and then some seven or eight of those who had horses insisted on seeing us as far as Juana Diaz. The ride down the mountain in the cool of the evening was quicker and easier than toiling up in the heat of the day, and by

the time we had reached Juana Diaz a glorious moon was high in the sky. Nothing would satisfy our escort then but to see us home, and so we started again in a race along the nine miles of flat road. The cool night air, the brilliant moonlight, and the good road, mounted on horses as anxious to race as their riders to race them, turned our ride into a wild gallop. Ponce was reached in, I really believe, record time; and then, with many fervent protestations of undying friendship, our cavaliers started on their ride home. The streets of the town were flooded with moonlight throwing mystic and fantastic shadows on the white roads as from some strong arc-lamp. Over the sea the Southern Cross was climbing into the sky, and "all the world will be in love with night," if they may enjoy the cool sweet air after a long day's picnic in the tropics.

THE KEY TO THE WEST INDIES

ST. THOMAS, the principal Island of the Virgin Group, owes its importance to its position. It has been called the "Key to the West Indies." The Virgin Islands belong partly to England, partly to Denmark. Many are merely barren rocks, and all are unimportant commercially, the abolition of slavery, and the many and severe hurricanes, being mainly responsible for their decline. St. Thomas is twenty-three miles in extent, only two miles larger than St. John—the only other island of any importance in the group. Both have belonged to Denmark since 1717. St. Thomas has a population of some 32,000, and is a free port. English is the language mostly spoken. The acquisition of this Island by the United States has frequently been mooted, but less has been said since the Stars and Stripes were unfurled over Puerto Rico, distant only seventy miles.

The Port of St. Thomas is made the centre of much shipping, many of the principal lines of steamships running to the West Indies calling in its almost land-locked

harbour. But it does not hold that place in the imagination of the Englishman going to the West Indies that it did in the days when the ocean steamer called first in its harbour. To-day the voyager from England lands first either in Jamaica or Barbadoes, and St. Thomas, "all pink and purple in the sun, and warm gray in the shadow," as Canon Kingsley describes it, holds only a secondary place. The harbour, formerly very unhealthy, is now quite free from fever, and the traveller, who either from accident or design is obliged to pass a few days there, will find much to interest him in this very cosmopolitan place. The town, Christina Aurelia (more often known as St. Thomas), is built in a semicircle of hills, and consists of one principal street running parallel to the shore; other roads lead up steep hills. There is a fort, red-brick police barracks, Governor's Palace, and other public buildings. In the principal street is situated the Moravian Church, which claims the distinction of having made the first nigger convert to Christianity in the West Indies. Two old stone towers dominate the town, known as Bluebeard's Castle and Blackbeard's Castle. The former is accredited with being the actual scene of the tragedies told of the fable-famed ogre, and from the tower a superb view of town and harbour is obtained, and well repays the uphill walk. "Blackbeard



FORT DE FRANCE, MARTINIQUE

was a child to Flint," Squire Trelawney tells us in "Treasure Island," but no doubt "drink and the devil" claimed his own in the days when the old buccaneer and his shipmates broached kegs of rum in the stronghold bearing his name. The Commercial Hotel, a large white modern building, is pleasantly situated in a garden near the quays, and is the centre of all the gossip, being the rendezvous of travellers from all the Islands and Central and the Northern States of South America. The hotel is built on American lines, and is a great boon to the traveller changing boats at St. Thomas, and having to wait, it may be, several days. From the balcony, which is also the restaurant, an ever-changing view of the busy port affords entertainment. Flags of all nationalities fly from the greatest variety of ships. The Red Ensign of steamers of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company is conspicuous. The ships of this line make a three-days' call every fortnight, coming up from Barbadoes on the arrival of the Trans-Atlantic Mail from Southampton, and returning to transfer cargo, passengers and mail from the Leeward Islands. Germany is represented by a boat of the Hamburg-American Line from Venezuela and bound for Bremen. The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique connect their service from Hayti and Puerto Rico to Havre, and *via*

Martinique from South America, to Bordeaux. Sailing vessels flying the Norwegian and Danish flags are seen, and an American whaler or two calls from time to time. Lying side by side with an English yacht is a United States cruiser, one of several similar ships carrying out manœuvres, the naval base being the Island of Vieques (Crab Island), lying between St. Thomas and Puerto Rico, and belonging to the United States. A platform jutting out into the harbour carries a flagstaff and saluting gun, and frequently the hills reverberate to the bang of the cannon saluting an incoming vessel. As we watched, a United States gunboat crept slowly to her anchorage to a salute of twenty-one guns. The quays present a very cosmopolitan appearance, with a crowd of sailors of so many different nationalities, and not infrequently the police are called in to settle differences of opinion. Leaving St. Thomas by a boat of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*, the passage across the Anegada Channel to the Island of Guadeloup occupies about thirty hours, and many islands, small, rocky, and uninhabited, are passed. A stop of an hour is made at Pointe à Pitre, and again at Basse Terre, and after keeping under the lee-shore of Dominica, Martinique is reached thirty-six—forty hours later.

THE BOILING LAKE OF DOMINICA

BEFORE the eruption of Mt. Pelée in 1902, but little attention had been paid to one of the most extraordinary natural phenomena to be found in the West Indies—the Boiling Lake in Dominica. That an active volcanic agency of some sort existed was known, but the extraordinary difficulties attending a journey to the place, and the numerous fatalities connected with it, had created in the minds of the niggers a superstitious dread and deterred them from venturing in the neighbourhood. Situated high up among the mountains of the interior, and surrounded by miles of virgin forest, its inaccessibility alone has proved a deterrent to many. But since the disaster which overwhelmed Saint Pierre, and the groundless fears of a similar catastrophe in Dominica, several expeditions have been made to explore the mystery of the Lake. The varying conditions of the numerous streams of hot water which flow from the mountain sides lead to the supposition of considerable changes, and it may be mentioned in this connection that were the medicinal properties

of these waters better known Dominica would doubtless come into prominence as a health resort. So much is the Lake talked about in the Island, that I felt considerable interest in seeing it, and succeeded in inducing Mr. B., a gentleman resident in Roseau, to accompany me in an endeavour to reach it. As this would necessitate our being away in the mountains for two nights, a few simple preparations had to be made, and we provided ourselves with such delicacies as are most easily carried—sardines, chocolate, biscuits, etc.—relying upon the natives to provide us with fruits and vegetables. These, together with a few other necessaries, we gave to two boys to carry, and rode off at 5 o'clock in the afternoon on our ponies up the Roseau Valley to the village of Laudat, where we proposed to spend the night.

The Roseau Valley is of great beauty, narrowing as it ascends to the slopes of the Morne Anglais, which rises nearly 4,000 feet high at the end of the valley. For the first mile or so a good road runs through extensive lime plantations, following the banks of the Roseau River. Then, having the river on the right hand, the road ascends the side of the Shawford Hill, affording fine views of the opposite side. Nothing breaks the intense stillness of this evening hour, except the splash of an occasional stream traversing our path on its way down to the

river. After climbing a thousand feet we stopped to admire the superb view of the coast and sea in the direction from which we had come, and ahead, the falls of the river, seeming a silver streak against a background of darkest green forest. On the other side of the valley is Wotton Waven, known for its sulphur springs and lake. Still ascending, we reached Sousmaiette, a few nigger cabins perched on the edge of the precipice over which not long ago a horse fell with its rider, while but a step further on a postman on his way to Saussonier lost his life in like manner. The last part of the way was in darkness, as night had fallen, and around us shone and glittered a myriad fire-flies, a fairyland at night.

On reaching Laudat we were most hospitably entertained in the little wooden Presbytery attached to the mission church of the Redemptionists. The simplicity of the place was accentuated by the sight of the nigger congregation assembling for vespers, carrying their twinkling "flambeaux" made of some resinous pine wood.

The first streak of dawn on the following day found us ready to start, and we were fortunate in finding an old wood-cutter who undertook to guide us to the Lake. So we set out on foot with this guide, the two boys carrying our luncheon and camera. Half an hour's walk brought us to the Roseau

River above the Falls we had seen on the previous evening, and, as the sun rose upon this scene of tumbling water and tropical forest vegetation, we were tempted to linger, but had to go on as it takes from sunrise to sunset to get through the forest and back again. After crossing the river no trace of path remained, but our guide, with unerring instinct, struck straight into the forest, blazing the trees as he went along. For an hour and a-half we ascended rapidly in Indian file through the forest, occasionally cutting away a mass of lianes which hung in our path. There was little undergrowth to impede our progress, but the ground was intersected with the roots of trees, making rapid walking difficult.

Crossing a ridge, a sharp descent brought us to the banks of a mountain torrent which has been aptly named in Dominican patois "Larivier Déjeuner," and here we called a halt to drink the cool water and take photographs. We now began a veritable scramble up a narrow edge of mountain, and through a denser growth than we had yet encountered, the most noticeable feature of which was the tree-ferns of many varieties. The last slopes of this mountain, which I believe is called Morne Nicholls, were negotiated on all fours, and on reaching the summit in cloud it began to pour with rain, and was very cold. From this altitude, 3,000 feet, we



FUMEROLES IN NEW CRATER, DOMINICA



could see the vapours arising from the crater which contains the boiling lake, and the air was impregnated with the smell of sulphur. A sudden lift in the cloud enabled us to see below us the bed of what is called the New Crater, from which arise several jets of boiling water and mud, with much hissing steam. Vegetation ends completely at the edge of this crater, the sides of which are very precipitous and formed of some crumbling loose earth of a reddish-brown colour. It was an awe-commanding sight 400 feet down, and our boys showed signs of fright and wanted considerable persuasion before they consented to accompany us, all their superstitions as well as physical fears having to be combated. Nevertheless we scrambled down to find a rock strewn ground through which struggled two streams of milky-white thick water, which, as it gave off steam during the whole course over which we could follow them, must have risen at a very high temperature. There were everywhere large deposits of sulphur, the crystals sparkling in every crevice of rock, while the ground itself was so hot that it could be unpleasantly felt through thick boots. The atmosphere was hot, sulphurous and nauseating, while the presence of poisonous gases made walking anything but pleasant. Roughly, the New Crater may be described as elliptical in shape, perhaps a mile long, and a quarter of a mile

wide, in one end of which a great barrier of rock interposes itself between the New and Old Crater, in which latter is the Boiling Lake. This barrier is about 80 feet high, and the walls of rock rise all round to a height of 400 feet. No living thing is to be met with, and the transition from the luxuriant forest to this place of death is most striking. The danger of staying long in such a place compelled us to hurry forward to obtain a view of the Lake. Jumping from stone to stone in the bed of the stream of boiling mud, we finally scaled the screening wall of rock. Then at last we saw it! A seething, boiling, mass of muddy water, thrown up from who knows what subterranean source, and tossing its foaming waves in this caldron of rock, while for ever on its surface hangs an almost impenetrable cloud of steam. It was a wonderful sight, yet terrible in its power. I am told that sometimes the waters will completely disappear, only adding to the great mystery that Mother Earth locks so tightly in her bosom. No doubt the scientist would explain it all as simple; but, extraordinary as the sight was, it was no matter for surprise that it terrified our boys, who, with awed voices, asked if "it were the devil below making it boil like that!"

Of our return I need say little more than that we arrived in Laudat completely

exhausted, and were again treated with the utmost consideration and kindness by the Father living in the Presbytery. We slept as only the worn-out can sleep in that beautiful mountain air, and the next day rode down to Roseau, where our adventure had caused great interest. We were both determined not to make the attempt again, but were I back in Dominica I should feel the fascination of that mystery in the mountains which would I am sure again prove an irresistible attraction.

MAKING A CACAO ESTATE IN DOMINICA

APART from its extraordinary beauty—and it would be difficult to imagine anything more beautiful—Dominica offers at the present day a very good opportunity for a young man with a moderate capital who is resourceful and enterprising. The Island is little known commercially, and but a fraction of its 190,000 acres is under cultivation, yet climate and soil alike make it one of the most fertile islands in the world. Under the French régime the sugar-cane was cultivated, but to-day cacao and limes are the principal exports. Since the disastrous hurricane which destroyed the lime plantations of Montserrat, the Dominican estates have assumed a place of first importance, and many acres near the town of Roseau are producing fruit of the finest quality, from which is made “Rose’s Lime Juice.”

The coast lands are for the most part in the possession of the nigger inhabitants who cultivate a small piece of land for their own requirements; but for the rest, the land belongs almost entirely to the Government,

and may be purchased in large or small allotments at about 10s. an acre. To this must be added the survey fee, amounting to 2s. 6d. an acre. A good road has been constructed, running from Roseau on the south-west, diagonally across the Island to a point on the north-east coast, for many miles on either side tapping a very rich agricultural country, and giving access to the chief town and port of the Island. From the coast the road ascends the Antrim Valley to an altitude of some 1,500 feet at a distance of about ten miles inland, and then crosses a high plateau known as the Layou Flats, which are 800 to 900 feet high. They are encircled by lofty mountains, the most prominent of which are the Morne Diablotin (5,314 feet), and the Morne Trois Pitons (4,672 feet). From the deepest valley to the highest mountain the land is covered with a luxuriant growth and intersected by rivers, Dominica boasting a river for every day in the year!

On these Layou Flats land may be acquired and a cacao plantation made. The smallest estate from which a practical result can be expected is 100 acres, which, with the Government survey fee, would cost £62 10s. To lay out the plantation, the land, which is covered with forest, should be cleared in patches of from five to fifteen acres, the belts of trees helping to shelter the young plants from severe winds. Out of the 100 acres

acquired, 40 acres can be cultivated, and it costs to fell trees, clear the land, and plant the cacao, £4 10s. an acre, or £180. The estate has now to be "nursed" for six years, and the total cost of this at £1 10s. per acre per annum is £360. Allowing 25 per cent. for "incidentals" during this period, a capital of £678 15s. will have been expended. The planter has also to make provision for a house, which with the necessary outbuildings will cost £275, while living expenses at £100 a year will bring up the total capital expenditure to £1,553 15s.

The most satisfactory way to obtain healthy cacao trees is to buy the young plants which have been grown from seed at the Botanical Gardens of the Imperial Department of Agriculture in Roseau. The greatest care is taken in the selection of the plants, and they should be ten months old when planted out. They must be sheltered from the sun by banana trees, the fruit of which forms the principal diet of the work-people. A cacao tree takes six years before it bears properly, and the amount of cacao, taking the price at 50s. per cwt., which may be expected at the expiration of this time, should yield a return of £300. It is not, however, until a cacao tree is ten years old that it is fully matured, and when this age is reached the income from the estate should be £600 per annum, which, it must be

admitted, is a very good return. The time for which trees will go on bearing is variously stated at between 80 and 100 years.

When clearing the ground much valuable timber is cut, and this will be used for building the house. There are about twenty-one varieties of wood to be found, but perhaps the most suitable for building is the "Bois Septant," which does not rot, and, like the oak, is a hard, beautifully-grained wood. From the "Mang" shingles are made, and these are used for covering the roof. The planter may of course consult his own taste entirely in the construction of his house, but many pretty models can be seen in the Island. The nigger is an admirable carpenter, if somewhat slow. The house should be built in a clearing of about twelve acres, and at a little distance from the kitchen and stable. All English vegetables grow readily in from three to four months; and a rose garden, of English roses, may be made in the same time; in addition to this, many of the West Indian fruit and vegetables grow wild in the forest.

Labour is plentiful and cheap, and only needs direction to be willing and useful. The nigger cannot be said to be hard-working, but with encouragement he works hard enough in a country where Nature takes so much upon herself. Living in the country is of course very cheap. A pony and cow

may be kept and fed on an abundance of " grass " which grows everywhere and is excellent fodder. Poultry do well, and it repays a settler to import good stock birds. The life is healthy, out of doors, and is made cheerful by paying and receiving the visits of other planters. Several estates which have been laid out in the last five years are now beginning to show encouraging results, and every year adds to the little colony of Englishmen who have made a home in Dominica.

MARTINIQUE

WHILE the voyager is still under the lee-shore of St. Lucia, the grand and rugged mass of Martinique is seen on the horizon, and one pictures Lord Rodney waiting for the French admiral to make sail thence before striking the blow which transferred the West Indies to the British Flag. Four hours later we drop anchor in the roadstead of Fort de France, under the shelter of the old fort, which is still called by the name once borne by the town—Port Louis. A few cable-lengths away lies a great French cruiser motionless on the still waters of the bay, but vigilant of French interests in the Caribbean Sea. A little boat lands us at the wooden pier jutting out from the shore, and giving on to a large open space called the Savanna, in the middle of which is a statue of the Empress Josephine surrounded by palm trees. Fort de France has been termed a “ville des fonctionnaires.” In it reside the Governor, the Government officials, garrison, consuls, and merchants. It contains a cathedral, which though quite modern and not very interesting, presents a striking spectacle on Sundays, when the people,

arrayed in the most brilliant costumes, attend high mass. The native women of Martinique are of a type quite distinct from the natives of other West Indian Islands, and many, with their mixture of Latin, Negro, and Carib blood, of quite extraordinary beauty. From the mountain-side at the back of the town the Rivière Madame is conducted from the Fontaine Gueydon, through the principal streets, by means of wide ditches, which "irrigate" the roadways, and no doubt materially help to maintain the reputation for healthiness which the place possesses. The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique have a large dock and establishment, situated in beautiful gardens, not the least interesting feature of which is a huge wooden building for storing ice for their ships, which is obtained from Norway. In the neighbourhood of the town are coffee, sugar-cane, cacao, vanilla, and other plantations, these constituting the principal exports.

It was afternoon when we weighed anchor, and, leaving Fort de France, steamed northward close under the lee-shore. Little villages nestled in indentations of the rock-bound coast, their native population engaged in fishing and exporting salted fish to the windward side of the Island, where it finds a ready market. The heat was intense: not a ripple broke the surface of the sea, and I



MT. PELÉE, MARTINIQUE

was with difficulty keeping awake, when a Frenchman sitting by me on the deck said: "There is Mt. Pelée," and a little ahead the great mountain, 5,000 feet high, rose from the water's edge. Nothing but the bumping of the screw broke the absolute stillness, and as we crept along within half a mile of the ruins of Saint Pierre, my informant, a French resident of the Island, reconstructed this modern Pompeii.

A gay city, built of stone, with handsome public buildings, a cathedral, beautiful villas, boulevards, cafés, a theatre, and high up the mountain side luxuriant public gardens. A system of tramways, electric light, a winter resort for the wealthy pleasure seeker, and an important centre for the prosperous merchant. For fifty years the volcano had given no signs of activity. Its peaceful forest-clad slopes had afforded shelter to many a gay picnic party who held their revels on the banks of the Lac des Palmistes, and its frowning grandeur had looked down in silence on the pleasure-loving town. Pelée slept, and by his side 42,000 human souls confided themselves to his protection.

On the 5th May, 1902, the Usine Guérin, situated high above the town, was, with its two hundred employees (mostly women), totally overwhelmed by an eruption of mud. Pelée was waking—had awoke—and panic was only averted by the arrival from Fort de

France of the Governor, his family, and some six hundred soldiers. The fears of the populace were allayed by the assurance of the authorities that no further danger was to be apprehended, and the town resumed its ordinary life.

Who may not reasonably suppose that the 8th of May dawned on Saint Pierre like any other day at this season? By eight o'clock the streets would present an animated appearance. Women coming to market carrying great baskets of fruit and vegetables on their heads, and servants bargaining, haggling, and chattering over their marketing. Signs of activity would not be wanting in the port, as lighters put off to ships which had arrived during the night, and all the other preparations for a busy day would be evident.

Then, with an explosion that was heard hundreds of miles away, destruction in a great cloud of steam, lightning, and molten rock, rushed in an overwhelming blast from the riven side of the mountain—Pelée, awakening from his long sleep, had dealt the death-blow to 42,000 living souls, utterly destroyed all vegetation, and hurling the sea from him, caused it to rush back on the burning shore in a mighty wave to anneal the molten earth. This sudden, overwhelming, irresistible devastation, strikes terror to the mind. In less time than it takes to recount

it, Saint Pierre was annihilated! Martinique isolated from the rest of the world by the breaking of the submarine cables, and the flaming mass of Mt. Pelée pouring out a cloud of scoriæ, which, falling on distant islands, bore silent witness to the appalling catastrophe.

As we watched, a light breeze moved the huge volcanic-cloud which enveloped the summit, and revealed the curious cone-shaped tower. This great mass, resembling the Matterhorn in shape, has been forced from the heart of the mountain, to a height of 1,000 feet. Terrific forces have raised it at the rate of twenty-five feet a day, until its size is approximately that of the Great Pyramid of Egypt, while from time to time great parts are detached and roll down from the summit with the noise of thunder. On the sites of what were once, maybe, villas, masses of rock of one hundred cubic feet have fallen! Nothing remains: all is grey, blasted, dead!

* * * *

I sat in a little kiosk on the edge of the Savanna in Fort de France. It is Saturday evening, April the 29th. From a brightly lighted hall across the way I can hear a chanteuse singing Gounod's "Valse de Mireille." There is a charity concert "sous le présidence d'honneur de M. le Gouverneur." A ragged little nigger boy offers me

La Martinique, a paper published on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and costing "deux sous." In a prominent place are printed the

BULLETINS CONCERNANT LE VOLCAN

Du 24 au 25 avril 1905.

Montagne constamment couverte.

Du 25 au 26 avril 1905.

Deux points lumineux persistent sur le dôme à la base de l'aiguille. Quelques grondements ont été entendus pendant la nuit. Le dégagement de vapeur est assez abondant.

Du 26 au 27 avril 1905.

Montagne constamment couverte; rien à signaler.

* * *

It is just such weather as preceded the great eruption. The atmosphere is charged with electricity. Far out at sea lightning is flashing from a bank of cloud and illuminating the horizon. The night is hot and oppressive; the stars are hidden. Motionless on the water lies the great cruiser, her many lights reflecting in bands of gold on the dark waters. The people are leaving the concert. Some come into the kiosk for cool drinks, while at a corner table some officers are playing dominoes. The parties break up; the square is deserted. The sky clears, and a myriad stars light up the white and ghostly statue of the beautiful Empress. A great stillness is everywhere.

* * *

"Rien à signaler."

HOMeward BOUND

Excitement, suppressed maybe, but none the less intense, pervaded every quarter of the great ship. For a week, wind and weather had favoured us: blue skies, sunny seas, starlight nights. The Southern Cross had dropped below the horizon, and every evening the Great Bear climbed higher and higher in the sky. We had discarded our white ducks, and only the most hardy still sat about the deck without an overcoat. It was a Sunday morning in October; a grey hue merged sea and sky in one; and the great gold globe of the sun had passed the meridian. We were still 1,000 miles from home, and we hoped to make a record run! Scarce a ripple broke the surface of the long Atlantic swell as it rolled athwart the ship. Groups of passengers stood about the deck or promenaded arm in arm, all discussing the day's "run," or speculating on the hour of arrival. A steward stood under the bridge by the ship's bell awaiting the two strokes of one o'clock to sound the bugle-call for luncheon. An officer, glass in hand, slowly paced the bridge, vigilant of our safety. Down in the heart of the ship men strove with the

insatiable hunger of the furnaces, and the twin-screws, responsive to their efforts, lashed the wake into foam.

But the officer on the bridge is seen to be looking through his glass at something on the starboard bow. A knot of passengers collect forward, soon joined by everyone on deck, and away down on the horizon the masts of a ship may be dimly seen. The call to luncheon is unheeded, as a 'prentice hand leaves the bridge and hurries to the captain's cabin, and as the captain goes to the bridge, rumour runs round that the ship is making a signal. In a few minutes a string of flags can be made out hanging from the spanker gaff, and the vessel slowly, in the light wind, crosses our course and luffs on our port bow.

"Stand by," rings the engine-room telegraph, and at the same time an officer musters a boat's crew on deck, and the falls are made ready to lower a boat. Now the vessel is but a mile ahead, and is lowering a boat. The French tricolour flaps idly against her spanker, and under it flies the signal, "Starving—no provisions."

"Stop," again rings the telegraph, and instantly, as the vibration ceases, a great roar of steam rushes from the safety-valves and floats away astern.

"One-eight," says an officer, watch in hand, as we lie-to and watch the little boat creeping nearer to us.

A sun-burnt sailor, in blue jersey and peaked cap, climbs up a rope ladder thrown over the side, and informing our chief officer that they have no disease on board, is allowed to come on deck. They need potatoes, biscuits and butter; they have only salt meat. An army of stewards hastily collect the required provisions, which are transferred to the boat, and the mate goes up to the bridge to thank and explain to our captain.

They are on a French vessel of Marseilles, 137 days out from New Caledonia, bound for Hamburg with a general cargo, and have rounded the Horn in terrible weather. These particulars are noted by an officer, who hands to the mate a card giving the exact latitude and longitude, the name of our ship, owners, and destination.

"Will you post this letter to my father?" enquires the Frenchman, producing the letter, and at the same time tendering five sous to a passenger. The commission is readily undertaken, the pleasure to be in lieu of payment, and with many grateful acknowledgments the Frenchman scrambles down the side to his boat.

"Thank you," flutter the little flags, and hats are waved.

"Ahead — full," rings the telegraph. "One-twenty-two" reports the officer, as the great vessel trembles and leaps upon her course. His Majesty's mails have been

delayed on the high seas, and fourteen minutes have to be accounted for.

An hour later, as we came on deck after luncheon, no speck marked the whereabouts of our distressed friend; he had sunk as mysteriously below the horizon as he had emerged from it.

Homeward voyage of the "Port Kingston," of the Imperial Direct West India Mail Service, from Jamaica to Bristol in 10 days, establishing a record.



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